

News Release

University of Minnesota Crookston Sophomore Grant Criger Completes First Student Solo Flight

*By Itollefts on Monday, October 28, 2013*Grant Criger, a sophomore at the University of Minnesota Crookston from Eagan, Minn., majoring in law enforcement aviation recently completed his first student solo flight. His flight instructor is Nic Huber and the milestone flight was completed at the Crookston Municipal Airport.

The first solo flight is a significant accomplishment in a pilot's career and creates a memory that will stay with the student forever. During this flight, a new pilot completes three takeoffs and landings in a row while his or her eager flight instructor watches from the ground and stays in communication via radio. Much preparation has gone into the first solo flight, with the student and instructor putting in hours and hours of flight and ground training on a wide range of subjects including FAA regulations, weather, and aerodynamics. Eventually, after passing a written test and satisfying the instructor that he or she can consistently make safe landings, the instructor gets out of the airplane and endorses the student's logbook for solo flight. Landing an aircraft is one of the most difficult skills to master for any pilot and involves difficult and complex eye-hand coordination as well as good judgment. Following American aviation tradition, removing a new pilot's shirt tail is a sign of confidence by the instructor in the student following the completion of the first solo flight. This tradition stems from the days when a student sat in the front seat of the aircraft with the instructor behind. Radios and intercom systems were not a part of early aviation, making it necessary for the instructor to tug on the student pilot's shirt tail to get his/her attention. A successful first solo flight is significant in that it means the student can fly without the instructor, and consequently, no longer needs a shirt tail. In observance of this tradition, aviation students at U of M Crookston have their shirt tails cut off by the instructor, and they are displayed at the Crookston Municipal Airport.

The aviation program at University of Minnesota Crookston is a partnership between UM Crookston and the University of North Dakota Aerospace Foundation (UNDAF). All academic classes and ground schools are conducted at the University of Minnesota Crookston campus while hands-on flight training is conducted by UNDAF and UM Crookston staff just 3 miles north of campus at the Crookston Municipal Airport. Unlike most university aviation degree programs which focus solely on aviation, U of M Crookston's "dual function" degree programs offer students both strong fundamentals in aviation, as well as significant coursework specific to their "other" field of study whether it be agriculture, law enforcement or natural resources. This integrated approach prepares graduates for a career in aviation and much more. To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu/aviation.

Today the University of Minnesota Crookston delivers 28 bachelor's degree programs, 20 minors, and 39 concentrations on campus--as well as 11 degrees online--in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

In the photo: Flight instructor Nic Huber (left) congratulates Grant Criger on the completion of his solo flight.



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